

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

/060 W

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R 252135Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0961

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, AR (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJ: REACTION TO CANCELLATION OF SECRETARY'S VISIT

REF: STATE 092197

1. FOREIGN MINISTRY: PUBLICLY, FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES AND HIS STAFF HAVE DEFENDED THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE SECRETARY'S TRIP, INDICATING FULL UNDERSTANDING FOR REASONS BEHIND IT AND POINTING OUT THAT FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES WILL IN ANY EVENT BE ABLE TO EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER DURING MAY OAS/GA. PRIVATELY, HOWEVER, FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED DISMAY. AS ONE HIGH RANKING OFFICIAL PUT IT: "WE DO NOT DOUBT THAT DISASTROUS SITUATION IN SUTHEAST ASIA WAS SUFFICIENTLY COMPELLING SO THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD TO POSTPONE TRIP AT THE LAST MINUTE. BUT THIS IS SIMPLY THE LATEST--AND PROBABLY THE LAST--POSTPONEMENT OF MANY. ON EACH OCCASION WE HAVE TAKEN SECOND PLACE TO ANOTHER AREA OF THE GLOBE. GIVEN THAT THE SECRETARY HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO FIT US IN AND HAS HAD TO POSTPONE TIME AFTER TIME DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS, WE CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT WE DO NOT RANK VERY HIGH IN YOUR ORDER OF INTEREST."

2. ALMOST ALL FOREIGN MINISTER OFFICIALS HAVE PRIVATELY CONCLUDED THAT POSTPONEMENT IS IN FACT A CANCELLATION AND

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THAT NEW DIALOGUE IS DEAD. EFFORTS TO CONVINCE THEM OTHER-

WISE DRAW ONLY SARDONIC SMILES. EMBASSY'S OWN ASSESSMENT IS THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO REKINDLE ENTHUSIASM FOR TRIP WITHIN FOREIGN MINISTRY. ONE OFFICIAL WHO HAD WORKED VERY HARD ON PREPARATIONS FOR TRIP WROTE IT OFF AFTER ANNOUNCEMENT OF POSTPONEMENT. "THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH YOU CAN POSTPONE JUST SO MANY TIMES," HE CONCLUDED.

3. PRESS: WHILE REFLECTING DISAPPOINTMENT AT POSTPONEMENT, PRESS HAS BEEN SURPRISINGLY RESTRAINED. TABLOID ULTIMA HORA DID RUN HEADLINE "KISSINGER JILTS LATIN AMERICA"; LA OPINION ON APRIL 22 SAID POSTPONEMENT HAD PARTICULARLY DAMAGED POSITION OF FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES, "WHOSE FRIENDSHIP WITH SECRETARY WELL KNOWN"; AND MAYORIA RAN IPS LATIN STORY ON APRIL 23 UNDER HEADLINE "KISSINGER AND HIS POSTPONEMENTS PUT AN END TO NEW DIALOGUE." OTHERWISE, HOWEVER, REPORTING HAS TENDED TO BE FACTURAL AND FAIRLY LOW KEY. ONLY EDITORIAL COMMENT SO FAR WAS IN APRIL 24 EDITION OF MAYORIA. EDITORIAL STRESSED THAT LATIN AMERICA SHOULD NOT EXPECT MAGIC RESULTS FROM DIALOGUE WITH US ANYWAY; RATHER THEY SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON HEMISPHERIC INTEGRATION. TAKING COLDLY REALISTIC TONE, EDITORIAL CONCLUDED THAT POSTPONEMENT OF TRIP SIMPLY POINTED UP FACT THAT US NOW FACED TOO MANY CRITICAL PROBLEMS AROUND THE WORLD TO HAVE TIME TO FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT COHERENT POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA. ERA OF BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA WOULD HAVE TO WAIT FOR BETTER WORLD CLIMATE.

4. SOME COMMENT WAS EVEN POSITIVE. WELL KNOWN COLUMNIST MARIO GRONDONA IN AN IMPORTANT TWO PAGE SPREAD IN THE WEEKLY MAGAZINE GENTE, FOR EXAMPLE, ASSERTED THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE IS DEEPLY INTERESTED IN LATIN AMERICAN AFFAIRS REGARDLESS OF THE POSTPONEMENT AND ADDS "HOW CAN THE DEPARTMENT NOT LOOK WITH RENEWED INTEREST ON THE MOST DEVELOPED PART OF THE THIRD WORLD, WHERE IT HAS SO MANY FRIENDS?" HE DISMISSES THE QUESTION OF THE POSTPONEMENT WITH THE ASSERTION THAT "IT WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE NEAR FUTURE ANYWAY".

5. POLITICAL PARTIES AND GENERAL PUBLIC: REMARKS OF POLITICIANS AND PRIVATE CITIZENS HAVE REFLECTED SEVERAL GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS: A) NEW DIALOGUE IS DEAD; B) SECRETARY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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KISSINGER NEVER INTENDED TO COME TO SOUTH AMERICA, AND CERTAINLY NOT TO ARGENTINA; C) FACT THAT HE DIDN'T COME IS TAKEN AS IRREFUTABLE PROOF THAT US NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN LATIN AMERICA.

6. EXPLANATION OF POSTPONEMENT HAS BEEN COMPLICATED BY SECURITY MEASURES ORDERED BY WASHINGTON OVER WEEKEND. EXODUS OF AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICIALS AND FAMILIES TO MONTEVIDEO ON

APRIL 21 AND FACT THAT NUMBER OF OTHERS MOVED INTO HOTELS IN
BUENOSAIRES WAS DULY NOTED BY PRESS. FACT THAT POSTPONE-
MENT OF TRIP FOLLOWED ON HEELS OF THESE MEASURES WAS TAKEN
BY MANY AS CLEAR INDICATION THAT REAL REASON FOR CANCELLING
TRIP WAS CONCERN OVER SECURITY SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. DAO
REPORTS THAT MOST ARMY OFFICERS ARE CONVINCED THAT SECURITY
CONSIDERATIONS AND NOT SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA REALLY
BEHIND CANCELLATION. EMBOFF WHO SAW EDITOR OF MAYORIA
APRIL 23 FOUND HIM OF SAME OPINION ALTHOUGH LATTER SAID HE
WOULD NOT SO INDICATE IN HIS PAPER.
HILL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, MINISTERIAL VISITS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: woolflhd
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BUENOS02918
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750147-0530
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750413/aaaaamin.tel
Line Count: 126
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 092197
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: woolflhd
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 SEP 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <22 DEC 2003 by buchant0>; APPROVED <22 DEC 2003 by woolflhd>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTION TO CANCELLATION OF SECRETARY'S VISIT
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, AR, US, XM, (KISSINGER, HENRY A)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006